I;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

PLATE VII.

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353
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Interior Views of a Kol House. Bedding and Clothes in Centre; Dewahar to far left.

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778

Closer View of the Dewahar showing evidences of Worship.

251
415

A Jar used for the storing of Grain inside the House.

[Facing p. 18]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

raised. An old shoe is also generally found along with the iron and stones under the floor. Occasionally bits of dried *tulasi* plant (*Ocymum sanctum*) are also scattered about the floor or again a bunch of *tulasi* may be tied at the base of the central pole. This pole stuck in the centre of the house being built is not a part of the permanent construction, but is a device to render the building work satisfactory and protect the home from demons taking possession of it while in the process of construction. On the pole can be seen hanging a basket and in this basket were found pieces of iron and tin, and bits of the outer *lepoed*[1] covering of another house. It may be taken from the walls of a house in which a happily married and prosperous family lived. In an earthen pot placed on the floor there was a yellowish liquid. The builder told us that this was water, but it had the appearance of cow's urine, although this could not be confirmed. Occasionally there is a sign of a little shrine about the construction somewhere, which shows signs of the presentation of the *hom* offering.

The inner floor of the house will be filled in and packed down after the walls are up. In dwellings of good construction the floor of the interior of the house should be higher than the veranda floor, and the veranda floor should, in turn, be higher than that of the courtyard. Kol houses have no windows, and the door-ways are low. On entering one must bow, or even get down on hands and knees. Bowing as one enters is said to be a method of showing respect to the household deities. Windows might let in evil forces, hence none is included.

Women may aid in building the house, but their work is limited to assisting in building the walls and floor of the house by bringing the earth or water, mixing them and helping to place the mud in the proper place. They take no part, however, in the construction of the roof. This is not a woman's job, and for a woman to get upon a roof is taboo—a thing that requires punishment or a fine.

Kols are able to construct the whole house. If the roof is to be of grass, the grass is brought from the forests, and *kusa* (*Poa cynosuroides*) and *duba* (*Agrestis tinearis*) are generally used. If tiles are utilized, cheap country tiles are obtained from the village potter. The Kol puts the tiles on the roof himself. The only thing which he cannot make is the door and frame, but these may be bought quite cheaply in the markets or may be made for him by the village carpenter. They are set in the opening left for the door, and the mud is packed in about them. There is usually but one door to a house. The more primitive types of houses so common among

1 See Glossary, Appendix VI, for meanings of Vernacular terms.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Kols have neither mud walls nor wooden doors. When they leave the house, a bit of thorny kruah is put in front of the doorway. This will keep out dogs and also any dangerous spirit which may be seeking admission. 342

When the building of a house is completed, there is usually a dedicatory ceremony consisting of installing and worshipping the household god or goddess or both, and a small niche in a corner or in the side wall is reserved for this purpose. The place is marked with *sendur* and the *hom* sacrifice is made. An offering of a chicken or young goat may also be made at the village shrine. A *tulasi* plant should also be planted somewhere in the courtyard. 342 776 778

DAILY LIFE. The daily life of the village and forest Kol centres mainly about the problem of daily bread. Before daybreak the women are up and are the first to be seen about the village. They sweep the house, the veranda and the courtyard; fetch water from a nearby stream, well or tank and grind the wheat for the morning meal. The sound of the grindstone is one of the earliest to be heard in a Kol village. The men are also up early, but do not have much to do in the way of household duties unless it is to chop a bit of wood. They wash their faces and rinse out their mouths with water which the women have brought, and, if they have bullocks, these are fed and got ready for the work in the fields; or if this is not to be done, they sit around in the sun in the courtyard and wait for some hot tea, or more probably for rice and *chapati* remaining from the meal of the night before. During the season when the work is heavy, they are in the field not long after the day has dawned, and the village is inhabited only by the women, children and older men. The bullocks for ploughing are driven before them; some of the older boys may assist in this, and the men carry the iron-pointed wooden plough. If some of the men-folk have no work in the fields, they may go into the forest for wood and grass; or, if there is plenty of food in the house and there is no pressing need for money, they sit around in groups and smoke cheap country cigarettes (*biris*) and gossip. 512 [252] [515] [264] [492] [407] [276 521]

In the meantime the women are preparing the morning meal. It is not usual for men and women to eat together. The women and children usually eat about the same time, though when the boys get in their teens, they like to eat with the men. During the middle of the morning, after the meal is nearly ready the women go for their daily bath to a nearby stream or tank. Women bathe every day throughout the year. The men bathe daily in the hot weather, but not so frequently in winter. The women do not remove their clothes when they bathe, though men usually remove all but a loincloth. The women [264] [515]

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584 796 354

a circle and all the time sang and beat time with their hands, the Chamar accompanying them with his drum. Several of the women took part in the digging of the earth and each girl was allowed but one blow with the pick. The earth thus displaced was gathered up with the mattock and put into the baskets. It was estimated that about thirty pounds were actually brought. The group then returned to the courtyard as slowly as they went but in the reverse order, with the lamp at the rear. The earth was then thrown in the centre of a small raised platform called the *mandil*, though occasionally the *mandil* is made later on from the earth brought in at this time. After the baskets were emptied the women brought water in small earthenware vessels and each threw water on the pile of earth until it was thoroughly soaked. The women then went to another part of the courtyard where each had left a bit of wheat which they brought from their homes when they first came. This was piled at another point and as each presented her wheat the mother dipped a bit of sweet oil from her household oil-jug and gave it to the other women. After this a small cone of cowdung, which is worshipped by unmarried girls, was set up on the *mandil*. See Figure 19. [237 778 589]

This earth should be sufficient to make either five or seven *chulhas* and they should be prepared sometime during that night. In Deosori they said that it would be done in the morning, and as it is done only by the women of the household it is likely that it was done after the people had departed. The party broke up at this point and from twenty to twenty-five women and young girls departed. This happened at 9 P.M. Occasionally there is a feast following the *mangarmati*, but there was none in this particular case. [574]

584 952

The next day the *chulhas* constructed from this earth should be ready for the preparation of the *lawa*, a mixture of parched paddy and millet, which is considered an indispensable part of the wedding preparations. During the time of its preparation there is joking and fooling. Before they can start to parch the rice one of the male members brings a young chicken and thrusts it into the lighted *chulha*. If the chicken does not catch fire and die (that is, if the *chulha* is not hot enough) it becomes the property of the male relative, but if it dies the women take it and make it into a curry. If the chicken catches fire no effort is made to save it. The parching of rice may now begin and this should be initiated by the man who brought the chicken. The same *chulha* which was used for the burning of the chicken should not be used for the subsequent parching. As the man commences his work some of his female relatives approach him and do all they can to disturb his work and irritate him. They may throw mud at him, abuse [231] [578]

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Chapter VII

DEATH AND ITS ATTENDANT CEREMONIES

761 Death is an event which every Kol knows must be faced relatively early in life. One does not find a high proportion of aged Kols.[1] Among many primitive people death is usually ascribed to evil influences, but among the Kols this does not seem to be the common belief. While they believe that some deaths may be ascribed to evil influences they do not believe that all are caused that way. On the whole they take quite a natural view of the phenomenon. What the gods will that they do. Death also may be due only to natural causes or carelessness and no hidden malevolent cause is assumed. Death is usually deserved, for as one sows he also reaps. Hence an early death may be justly merited and caused by corrupt living. The Kols do not seem to be as superstition ridden as many groups are, yet we found indications that they hold the general local village point of view. On [771] the whole there is a wholesome attitude toward the supernatural—the world is not altogether evil.

763 The Approach of Death. When it is clear that a person is about to die there are certain things which ought to be done. It was found that the custom of bringing a cow to the bedside of the dying man [825 783] is known and is occasionally practiced. The dying man is asked to take hold of her tail. This will help him to get to heaven, for the cow is now considered an offering to God, and it is held that by holding the tail the [271 778] dying man makes this offering. If available, he is also made to drink a little Ganges water which is regarded as the very best of drinks to give him at that hour. Failing this, a sip of water in which gold has been washed [823] is efficacious. Gold is considered an incarnation of God and a symbol of purity. Again, some ordinary water into which some ground up leaves [824] of the *tulasi* plant (*Ocymum sanctum*) have been thrown is advantageous. Such drinks are said to purify the dying person and prepare the soul for its flight to other worlds. Hindu influences are apparent.

Usually the person who is dying is placed on the ground to expire. The body is placed on the ground so that there may be close contact with Mother Earth. In some places it is said that a man may just as well die

[162 171] 1 This holds for primitive tribes in general, although any statement of age is unreliable. The 1931 census figures show that among the Kols there were only 100 men and 99 women per mile over forty. Other tribes show the following: Gond 154 men and 155 women; Maria 106 and 97; Baiga 143 and 146. Hindus rank higher—171 and 173 for Brahmins and 196 and 193 for Kunbis. *Census of India*, 1931, xii: I, p. 131.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

764 the house, and preferably they should not be brought into the village, but this is not avoidable in all cases. It is usually the custom to hang the *ghara* in a tree at some distance from the house and village, although at times the *ghara* is buried after being sealed and the place above it is marked for later exhumation.

[798 It is preferable that the bones be taken direct from the burning *ghat* to the place of disposal, a sacred river being the most suitable place. 823] The Ganges and the Nerbudda are the best for this purpose; but if there is no immediate hope of being able to go to one of these all the bones and ashes except a mere fraction are thrown into a tank or a stream nearby and the residue is kept for a future trip to one of them. It may be two or three years before this can be done, and if a relative cannot take it a friend may do so.

After the ashes have been collected the place where the body was burned must be treated. It is first plastered, this being done by the women of the house, though the chief mourner may begin it. Over the plastered portion is now scattered the following, or some of the following: rice, rock salt, mustard seed, millet seed, and a little milk. [775 A two pice piece (*takka*) should also be deposited. These things have 789] a dual purpose: they serve the spirit of the departed and also protect it from the encroachment of evil spirits. The growth of the mustard plant, should it sprout, is said to be something in memory of the departed. Sometimes a little sugar "for the ants" is also scattered over the plastered place.

764 *Throwing the Ashes in the River.* We were told at a centre about 177 ten miles from the Nerbudda river, how the ashes should be dealt with 793 if taken to the river. In this place following the more Hinduized types of behaviour, they make use of a Brahmin priest. He performs a ceremony which is called *sirana*, meaning the "head side"; probably signifying the resting place of the head. The ashes are brought to him in the bag or *ghara* and he reads some sacred words from his books and makes a prayer to Yama, the god of death, to accept the spirit of the deceased. This is followed by a prayer addressed to the sacred river, Nerbudda *Mai*. She is implored to accept the ashes and to give peace to the departed spirit. The ashes are then cast into the river. The Brahmin receives a fee in cash or offerings.

764 Further north the Kols look to the Ganges as the river into which 778 the ashes should go if that is possible. The Kols in the south insist that the Nerbudda is just as sacred and as good as the Ganges. One man claimed that occasionally the ashes are divided, half being taken to the Nerbudda and the other half to the Ganges. The place where

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the ashes are thrown is called the *Kharighat* and the ceremony described as *khari thanda karna*—"the cooling of the ashes."

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THE RETURN TO THE DWELLING PLACE. Whether the body has been buried or burned, the return from that place to the house is essentially the same. The party moves off one by one after encircling the spot, but presently the men linger and group themselves together, and the women do likewise in another group in the rear. Having once completed the round of the grave or cremation place, they should not look backwards lest the movement be interpreted by the spirit as an invitation to come along; or lest they be attacked. The women bring back with them any of the sweets that remained after placing them along the pathway as they went toward the funeral place, also some of the water left after washing the body. The sweets are cast into the tank or river in which they bathe, and the water is kept till they reach the house after the ceremonial bath, when a bit of it may be mixed with *haldi* and scattered on the chief mourner or others, and the rest used to put out any fires in the house.

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Bathing. The ceremonial bath should be taken in a tank or a stream, and if necessary a detour is made to include one in their return trip. If neither is available water from a well may be used, but the actual bathing must be at some distance from the well and the water should be drawn by some one who was not at the burial ground. Whether the bath is taken at a tank or stream, the men should bathe first. The bathers should line up and if possible should all go under the water together. After being submerged once or twice they step back to the bank and proceed home in their wet clothes. The women then bathe following much the same procedure, and go home in wet clothes. Reaching there fresh water must be used to wash their feet and now they may enter the house.

768 765 [296]

Cleaning the House. During the next few hours after the return home there is much to do. All clothes have to be changed and the dirty ones washed, preferably by a Hindu *dhobi*. All the pots and vessels made of earthenware must be thrown out upon the refuse pile. Sometimes they are broken and at other times are set out and the Domar or Basor comes and takes them away. The floors and walls of the house have to be plastered and thoroughly cleaned. The chief male mourner must have his head and face shaved, but a little tuft of hair, the sacred scalp lock or *chutiya*, is generally left. Usually a Hindu *nai* is called in for this, although the work may also be done

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1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

and new ones brought in. Metal vessels are not affected. Hindu influences are apparent.

Rivers. The Kols say that there are but two rivers in India which are really sacred, the Ganges and the Nerbudda. They put the Ganges in the first place. Like most Hindus, Kols believe that it is good to bathe in these rivers and that to do so will help to wash away sin and give one merit. Kols in the vicinity of Jubbulpore frequently go to the Nerbudda, but seldom to the Ganges.

GODS AND GODDESSES WORSHIPPED BY KOLS. The worship to which the Kols really give themselves is not that of the gods of the Hindu pantheon, nor the forces or the powers of nature, but rather of the village deities—*deotas* and *devis*—who are intimately connected with their daily life and outlook. The majority of these deities are female, and it is such deities that really count. They are termed "mothers," and many have *mai* meaning "mother" attached to their name. The male deities are called *babas*, "fathers"; or *deos*, "godlings."

The Kol Pantheon. Among Hindus the Supreme Being is worshipped as Vishnu by the Vaishnavas and as Siva by the Saivas. Others who worship the Supreme deity exclusively as a female principle are called Saktas. The wives of Vishnu or Siva may be worshipped as Lakshmi and Parvati, thus introducing the female principle. Nevertheless the *devi* is secondary to the *deva*. In the case of Sakti worship, the Devi is made supreme and the absolute Brahma from whom Brahma, Vishnu and Siva proceed, can do nothing without her activity. This form of religion is seen particularly in Tantra and Sakta Hinduism.

The goddess of the Saktas may be called by the general term "Devi," but is worshipped in many forms. Various aspects of her life or achievements are remembered under different names, and she even may assume the form of a male. The worship of Devi is usually associated with Siva, rather than Vishnu, and many of the concomitants of Saivitism are associated with her worship.

From the evidence that follows, which is largely from the lips of Kols, it would appear that the Devi principle is the main factor at work in the Kols' idea of deity. Khermai is occasionally given an all-inclusive aspect. Bhagavati is essentially Devi. She has "six sisters" who are really forms of herself.[1] Kols have never been

[1] "In all parts of South India the seven sisters are the most prominent among Dravidian deities." —Elmore, W. T., *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*, p. 19. He names the following as examples, though he notes their names vary from place to place: Poleramma, Ankamma, Muthyalamma, Dilli Polasi, Bangaramma, Mathamma and Renuka.

l:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

776 Jalni
Joginimai
Jogni
Kalimai.
Kalka.
Karnasin.
Khermai.
Lorhadhar.
Mahamai.
Marhai.
Marhimai.
Paramjiyoti.
Phonamukhi.
Phulmatimai.
Raktpiyasi.
Shardamai.
Shivari.
Sitalamai.

Phul.
Sannyasi deo.

FEMALE DEITIES WORSHIPPED BY KOLS

Alop. This deity is not widely worshipped. She is able to disappear very suddenly and reappear just as suddenly elsewhere.

Asmani devi. "The heavenly one." This *devi* is the one who [184] generally protects individual houses. She is particularly popular around Jubbulpore, but further north is not so often mentioned. Her shrine is found in connection with the house, and a white flag, or 778 782 a white segment on a red flag, usually indicates her presence. Her favourite offering is a young female pig. She is usually worshipped just outside the house, although she may also be found within. The accompanying diagram shows a typical shrine to Asmani devi. She is frequently called Asmanimai.

Athabhuji. This is the goddess of eight hands. Kols are not clear about her, but probably this is a term for the wife of Siva, called Uma, Parvati, Durga, Kali and Bhavani.

Bairam. This deity is generally female, but sometimes is considered a male deity. She is usually kept outside the house, and seldom, if ever, within it. The Kols say that her chief work is to frighten away evil spirits—*bhuts.* As long as she is near the doorway, such will not dare to enter. The name may be related to the hero Bhairon, or may be a confusion with Barambaba.

Bhagavati. Really means "one who is a devotee"—a *bhagat.*

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

This is a very general term with Kols and usually refers to one of several. Khermai, Shardamai, and the like are frequently called Bhagavati.

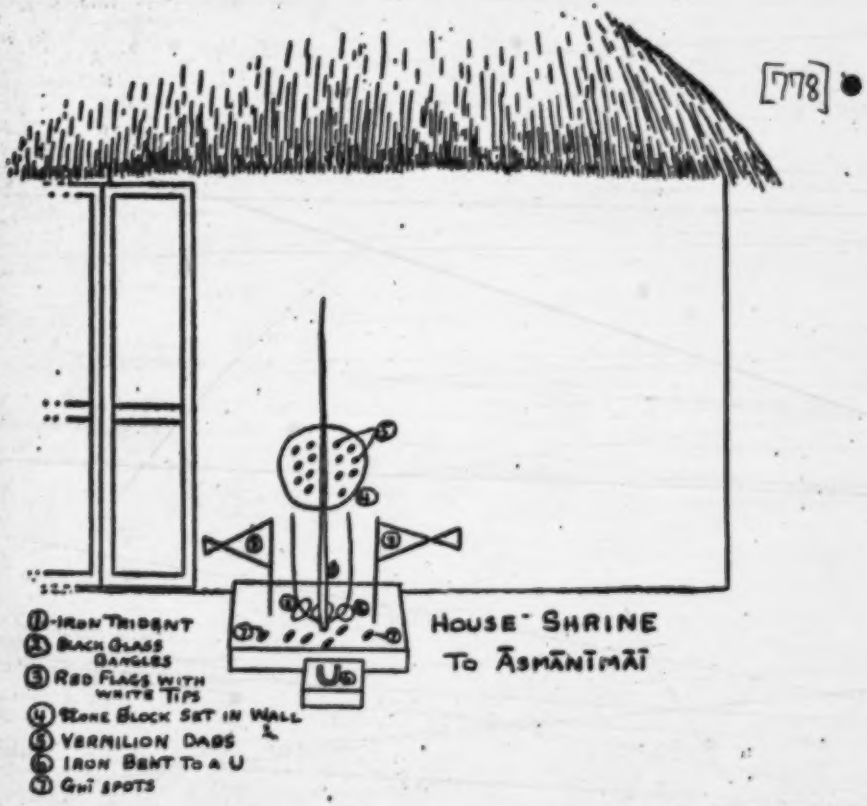

Fig. 25

Bindajali, Bindra Basni, Bindawasnimai are goddesses who had their origin in the Bind mountains, the modern Vindhyas. While not very important to the Kols of today, nevertheless they may represent the names of some of their deities in other days when they lived in the Vindhya mountains. It is not unlikely that they are forms of Kali.

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A shrine to the Buffalo god Bhainsokhar, at Benda. The plant growing on the platform is the Tulasi.

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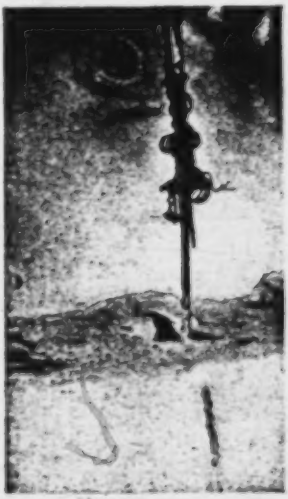
Kol shrine to Khermai in Jubbulpore Hill area.



Shrine to Jogni devi beside the doorway of a Kol House. Note the black glass Bangles on the bamboo stick and the Ghi marks below.

[facing p. 136]

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776 *Buri devi.* "Bad Goddess." Sometimes this is made a male and called Bura Deo. It is probable that this is connected with the 782 chief Gond deity, Buradeo. This deity is not widely worshipped among the Kols, but should a sacrifice be necessary she prefers a female kid of reddish colour.

Chandika. This deity is said to have one body and two mouths, one in the front and the other in the back, and is a form of Kali.

Chithra devi. Goddess of torn clothes. This deity is worshipped in connection with the new moon, when a piece of torn cloth should be offered her, good clothes held up, or some cloth tied to a Tamarind tree. In this manner she helps one to get new clothes.[1]

Dhartimai. The goddess of the earth. Worship and ceremonies [241 in connection with this deity are observed at the time of ploughing 184] and threshing, but only by the agricultural Kols. A *hom* offering is all that is usually given her. Probably she is related more closely to the Hindu pantheon than are those requiring a bloody offering.

Jalni. Some Kols claim that Jalni is the Creator of the universe. [773] This may refer to Jalpati, the Hindu deity presiding over water. The Kols have the legend that before there was an earth all was water. Jalni, however, is not much worshipped by Kols.

Jogni devi. Frequently called Jognimai, is a goddess who [778] particularly cares for children. The picture shows a shrine outside the home.[2] The pole above has black bangles and drops of *ghi* may be observed at the base. When children are ill, or in danger, or affected by the power of evil spirits, Jognimai should be propitiated. [751] At the time of a smallpox epidemic, one of the parents offers her a cocoanut and pours water over her shrine, in order that she may not allow the smallpox to attack the children.

[496] A Kol who worked on the railway claimed that it was Jognimai that caused the locomotives to run. He would often make an offering to her just before the locomotive started.

Kalimai. Kalimai is very popular among all the lower classes, and the Kols have also accepted her. While they do not give her the chief place, which is usually given to Shardamai, yet she is said to be one of the six sisters of Shardamai. It is not customary for Kols to [778] have a shrine to her alone. When she is worshipped, it is at the village shrine along with the other deities such as Khermai, more generally [822] worshipped by Kols of the village. Her colour is black, and black in a flag over a shrine indicates that she may be worshipped there. She should be offered darkish-coloured cocoanuts, or if animal sacrifices

1 See page 131.
2 See plate xxii.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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A Village shrine near Sihora. The Panda stands at the right. The shrine is at the base of a Nim tree.

[298]

A closer view. Note the iron lash, Salagrama stone, flags and spiked sandals.

[FACING p. 137]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

are made, the animal should be of a black colour. Black glass bangles will also be attached to her part of the shrine or found where she is worshipped. She likes the Tulasi plant and sometimes lives in it.

Occasionally she is a household goddess and is worshipped along with other household deities.

When the spirit of Kali possesses a worshipper, he can walk without discomfort or injury on spiked sandals.[1]

Kalka. Is one of Sharda's six sisters. She is seldom invoked, for according to Kols, when Shardamai or Kalimai are worshipped she is happy and pleased.

Khermai. This *devi* is probably the one most frequently worshipped by Kols. The Census Report classes her as the Earth Goddess[2] and Crooke[3] believes Khera to be the same as Khetrpal, the field guardian. Sometimes it would appear that the term included many kinds of deities such as Kali and Sitalamai. Her shrine is found in or near every Kol village, and she is always mentioned; it is also frequently claimed that she must be considered first, subsequently any others that one might choose. Sometimes she is called Bhagavati and is said to be the best mediator between men and Bhagawan, for if she is kept pleased and contented, one does not have to worry about Bhagawan.

Khermai's duties are manifold. She is the village watchman and protector. She wards off evil spirits and prevents their entry into the village. Sometimes her shrine is placed at the south of the village to ward off the evil spirits which so frequently come from that direction. In times of illness, she is invoked, and is thought to be intimately connected with disease; when one has smallpox she is worshipped in the person who is stricken. Cholera and smallpox are sometimes said to come directly from Bhagawan, and she is the best protector in case he sends them. On such occasions she should be given a libation of water and the village may be "tied" with her help.[4]

She is thought to help the Kols in all kinds of difficulties; she guards a man going on a journey; as he leaves, he may promise her an offering of a cocoanut which he will give if he returns safely. At set times she possesses her devotees, and through them reveals her will and answers their questions on problems confronting them. The sure test of her presence is the power to thrust an iron trident through the tongue or cheek.

1 See pp. 148, 180.
2 *Census of India*, 1911. X:1, p. 99.
3 Crooke, W., *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, pp. 92, 93.
4 See Chapter IX, Tying the Village.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

776 1782 Khermai is offered many things: a few annas may be left at the shrine; cocoanuts are a favourite offering; *ghi*, *puris*, *batasa*, and *ganja* are forms of food and drugs which please her and are frequently placed before her shrine. She likes *sendur* marks here and there about the place where she is worshipped, and incense is welcomed. Lemons and limes are always acceptable and should be placed before her. They also prevent the evil spirits from molesting the place.

If the occasion is sufficiently serious, an animal sacrifice is made to Khermai. Apparently no particular colour is required, although [825] in one centre it was said that should a chicken be offered, it should be white. She likes young female animals: pig, kid or lamb. These are later eaten at a ceremonial meal in connection with the shrine.

[778] [824] Khermai is best worshipped under a *nim* tree (*Melia azadirachta*), and her shrine is generally found there. If there is no *nim* tree available, a *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*) or a *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*) tree will do. She is generally worshipped after sunset, although this is not always the rule, especially if there is an emergency. In summer time when it is hot and dry, some *gharas* of water are kept at the shrine and people frequently pour water over the shrine to cool the *devi*.

If any danger threatens the village or an epidemic is near, some milk, liquor and powdered charcoal may be mixed and sprinkled about the village in her name. This is followed by an animal sacrifice and a ceremonial meal at the shrine. In case of smallpox, in addition to the regular offerings, she may be given a bath each day for ten days. Then a mixture of oil and turmeric powder is poured out before her.

Mahamai. "The Great Mother." This goddess is the same as [753] Sitalamai, the goddess of smallpox and the name is an euphemistic title. Kols are not always clear concerning the relationship of the two and sometimes they have been named together. A red flag indicates the presence of this deity.

[761] *Marhai*. Is said to be the goddess of death, but under this name at least, does not seem to be very important, and no satisfactory information can be given about her by the Kols. She is probably the same as Maridevi.

[753] *Maridevi*. The goddess of epidemics, particularly of cholera and plague. By some informants she is said to be Khermai's elder sister. She is very powerful, and there is no better protector from these diseases than this goddess. In the Kaimur hills one group claimed that she was the most powerful of all the *devis* which they worshipped.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

776 782

They said that she spreads and controls not only cholera and smallpox, but all sorts of diseases.

She should never be offered a chicken, because it is not valuable enough to please her. She desires a young goat or pig. The *hom* sacrifice is also pleasing to her and a cocoanut always is acceptable. Pots were noticed hung in trees, and it has been ascertained that these are for her to refresh herself on a hot day. In this way they hope to win her favour.

Phulmatimai. Is a sister of Sitalamai, goddess of smallpox, but causes a milder type of eruptive disease. An offering to Sitalamai is pleasing to her, and no further sacrifice need be offered.

Shardamai. Shardamai is generally placed at the head of their pantheon by nearly all Kols. Her name may be traced to the Sanskrit word *sarada* meaning autumnal. Her temple is near Maihar about 100 miles north of Jubbulpore, near the borders of Rewa State. It is situated on a steep hill which rises about five hundred feet above the surrounding plain, and can easily be seen to the west of the railway line. The spot is a very popular place of pilgrimage, both for Kols and other tribes and castes. A visit to this spot elicited much information about her and her worship. She has six sisters, according to informants, among them being found Kali, Kalki and Kalchi. In olden days animal sacrifices were made and the place ran with blood, but such are now prohibited by order of the authorities of Maihar State. Cocoanuts now represent the chief offering, but along with them *ghi*, *loban* (incense), *puris*, flowers, and the like are put before her. The hillside is literally covered with the shells of the cocoanuts broken before Shardamai. There are also images of other gods and goddesses under the same temple roof. These include Kali, the black goddess, wife of Siva; Narsingha, an incarnation of Vishnu; Bhagawan, the adorable one; Hanuman, the monkey god; Annapurna devi, here worshipped by the women desiring children; Chhatthi devi, worshipped on the sixth day after the child's birth, (and here the hair of the child's head is first shaved before her); Chandi devi, said to be a sister of Kali; Kotwali devi, the protector of the temple and the worshippers who come; and finally Kal Bhairo, said to be the son of Kali. In this strange company Shardamai is central and is *the* goddess of the whole.

776 778 782 [178]

While Shardamai dwells in Maihar and is localized as no other Kol deity, she is nevertheless also worshipped in the homes and at the village shrines. In some places a small earthen platform, about four feet square and raised some six inches above the ground, is sufficient. Upon this a trisul is stuck in the centre to represent the place of her

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

worship. No image is found, but there are exceptions. In Rewa State it was said that she should be worshipped at least twice a year: two days before the *Dasara* festival (September-October) and eight days after Chaita (March-April).

While animal sacrifices are forbidden at the Maihar temple, they may still be offered at the village shrine.[1] One group said that a black kid was the only acceptable offering, while from others it was learned that chickens, lambs and suckling pigs may all be sacrificed. The usual vegetable offerings are likewise acceptable. She frequently possesses people and speaks through them.

Childless women, especially, should worship her and make offerings and sacrifices, so that she may speak to them through the *panda* and tell them what to do before they can expect children. Shardamai is therefore reverenced at this place by childless women. It is also claimed that she can restore sight and cause the blind to walk and is a general miracle worker.

During *Chaita*, the Hindu month corresponding to parts of March and April of the Christian calendar, there should be an evening fast to Shardamai covering nine days. Regular food may be taken only in the morning, and the evening meal should be limited to water, milk and water-nuts called *singhara* the Water-caltrop (*Trapa bispinosa* or *natans*). On the ninth day the big offering to Shardamai must be made. Before anyone may partake of the meal on the ninth evening, a cocoanut[2] must first be broken before the village shrine and offered to her, and then the edible part distributed to those present. Thereafter regular meals may be taken. If possible someone from the village, or better yet several from the chief families should go to Maihar to worship. Their worship at Shardamai's temple and the worship at home will reinforce the bond of friendship which they must maintain.

Shivari or Sheori. Shivari is called the mother of all Kols and served Rama during his exile and search for Sita and has thus become deified. Shivari is nearly always listed by Kols, nevertheless actual worship of her is rare; but Kols talk of her temple somewhere in Rewa and also at Sheori-Narayan near Raipur, eastern Central Provinces. Stories concerning her are found in connection with the study of the origin of the Kols and in the chapter on legends.[3] She probably represents a tribal goddess.

Sitalamai. This name is a euphemistic title meaning the cool,

1 Kali worship is associated with animal sacrifice and Shardamai is probably equivalent to Durga in Hinduism.
2 Probably a relic of human sacrifice.
3 See pp. 8-10; also Chapter X.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

thread hung on the tree in which he is found. Animals are never sacrificed to him. One such tree, claimed to be the dwelling place of Barum *baba* was inspected, but there was no sign of offerings having been made there. As far as possible Kols avoid trees inhabited by him, particularly after dark.

In Rewa, Barum *baba* was said to be the spirit of a deceased Brahmin. Probably this is why the sacred thread is so acceptable to him as an offering and should be hung on the trees in which he resides.

Bas deo and Barum *deo* are probably the same in the thought of the Kol. These spirits prefer to live in the *bar* or Banyan tree, though they are reported as living in *pipal* trees as well. They are mostly thought of as vindictive and evil, but it is also said that they are somewhat afraid of people and that they try to please men if they can; it is good for man to get a vision of Bas *deo*.

Bhainsokhar, *Bhaino*, and *Bhainsasor* are all forms of the buffalo god or demon. Crooke has certain information in this connection.

> The Kols believe in Naga-era who occupies wells, tanks, and stagnant waters, the embodiment of malaria, and Garha-era, a water goddess, 'frequently and truly described as the cause of sickness, and propitiated with sacrifices to spare their victims' (from Dalton). Such spirits sometimes appear in the form of animals, like Bhainsasura, the buffalo demon akin to Mahishasura, with the same meaning, who gives its name to Mysore, the embodiment of death, like the black buffalo on which Yama, god of death, rides, which was slain by Durga, the life protecting goddess. They often show themselves in the shape of a turban which clings to the fisherman's hook and increases in size as he tries to drag it ashore or pulls him into the water—all impersonations of the vague awe and mystery of dark, still water pools. Hence they are special protectors of passengers at Ghats or fords.[1]

The Kols we interviewed are vague about this deity, but feel that the buffalo god is dangerous and ought to be propitiated. At Benda a shrine was found to him. A picture shows the white mound in the centre of a platform as his dwelling place.[2] The plants are *Tulasi*—the sacred basil.

Burha deo. This deity is probably the same as Bura *deo*, said to be the chief deity of the Gonds. While Kols know him, it appears that very little is actually done, other than that his name may be called at times of worship along with other lesser deities.

Dulha deo. The worship of Dulha *deo* or Dulha *baba* is widespread in Central India, and the Kols have much to do with him. He

1 Crooke, W., *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, p. 60.
2 See plate xxii.

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

776 is the bridegroom deity. The general view is well summed up by Crooke:

> Strange, abnormal features of the scenery often become objects of veneration. In Mirzapur District there is a rock in the form of a hideous, grinning skull, with enormous teeth, known as Dantandeo, 'the demon with the teeth'. ....The same feeling is illustrated by the cult of Dulhadeo, 'the bridegroom deity', which is widely spread from the Central Provinces up to the hills which rise above the valley of the Ganges. He is one of the deified spirits of men suddenly slain before their desires were accomplished, and like others of his kind he should have become a Bhut or malignant spirit. But he is now generally regarded as a friendly household godling. Stone pillars and rocks are often associated with his tragic fate.....[1]

A Kol at Barela insisted that Dulha *deo* was the supreme deity, but generally speaking he is regarded by the Kols as a beneficent household god. [778] He usually dwells within the house and a piece of stone placed in a notch in the wall and daubed with *sendur* indicates his presence. He is offered sacrifices at set seasons, but before each meal a little food should be put aside for him. If he is neglected and gets angry he may cause harm to the family. If he is to be venerated outside the house, a little mound of earth about eight inches high may be raised close to the wall of the house not far from the doorway. This is simply whitewashed and called Dulha *deo*.

776 782 Offerings made to him are much like those given to other deities. It is often said that he should never be offered a chicken. He prefers either a kid or suckling pig. [805 787] His favourite time of worship is in the Hindu month of *Kunwar*, (September-October). This is the time his spirit possesses people and speaks through them.

[264 585] In Rewa, Kols say that after the marriage festivities the families concerned must not eat without first making an offering to Dulha *deo*. The main offering should be a male pig, which is offered to him, then cooked before the shrine and eaten sacramentally. The bones and pieces that are left are buried in a hole in the floor of the house, for if they should be thrown out or exposed trouble would result.

Gwalbansa baba. This deity is another household god of the same type as Dulha *deo*. He is said to be the master of the house and is always worshipped within the dwelling. He is particularly propitiated at *Jawara* time when an animal offering, preferably a goat or pig, is sacrificed inside the house. The blood is sprinkled about the [264] niche in the wall down near the floor which had been freshly plastered. Nothing whatsoever of the slain animal should be allowed to go out-

1 *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 101.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

He is given offerings of foods and vegetables and the *hom* offering is always acceptable. Because he is in the form of an animal, he should never be given an animal sacrifice. Among Hindus, Hanuman is also worshipped by the Vaishnavite sect which does not offer animal sacrifices. According to some Kols, Tuesday is the best day to offer Mahabir his sacrifices and these are offered only by men. The cocoanuts and foods offered and placed before him are, after prayer, taken up and distributed among the worshippers present. Some said that Mahabir is displeased if anyone should be worshipped before him. He has supreme control over all *devis* and *deotas*, and they have no power over him nor can they touch him. Therefore they worship him first. It was only one group that made this surprising claim.

Mansa deo. Mansa *deo* is also a household god, but is usually worshipped outside the house. A small platform of mud is raised by the wall just in front of the house, and on the wall some daubs (usually four) of *sendur* are put, and two small red flags are set up. Some ashes will often be found there and bangles, beads, and the like. If Mansa *deo* is not kept contented by the usual offerings of food and cocoanuts, he may attack the family. When he is happy, he wards off evil spirits.

Nanga baba. This word means "Naked Father," and the Barela Kols believe that he lives in the hills just above that town. He is greatly respected for his purity and plainness of life. His main task is that of stone sculpturing. Many of the oddities of geology about Barela are ascribed to him and his work, and some of the stones which he is said to have cut up, smoothed and flattened are used today for the building of bridges. Nanga *baba* fashioned them, they believe.

Sannyasi deo. This god is usually found associated with the village shrine. Probably he is the spirit of an ascetic of some kind, now elevated to the place of a *deota*. He is offered cocoanuts and tobacco, and protects people. The offering of tobacco probably confirms the conjecture that he was once a wandering *sadhu*. At the time of the *bawa* if he should enter and possess a devotee, the person possessed will reveal the presence of Sannyasi by taking up the iron tongs kept at the shrine and beating and pinching himself with them. To do this is a sure sign that Sannyasi *deo* has come and is truly present.

All of these deities are known to the masses of the people in Central India, and are propitiated from two points of view. This has been aptly described as "spirit scaring" and "spirit squaring."[1] If

1 Enthoven, R. E., *Folklore of Bombay*, p. 14.

2 [i.e., Mahabir or Hanuman.]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

the point of an iron trident through the cheek or tongue or part of the skin of the neck, and ask the "candidate" to jump and run about with it in place. This is the final test, as it were, of the validity of the claim to be a Kol priest. Further on is a fuller description of the phenomenon of the *bawa*.[1]

Duties of the Priest. The duties of the priest are largely connected with the village shrine. He should keep it in order, offer the cocoanuts and animals, and perform the *hom* sacrifice. He is also the mouthpiece of the goddess. When possessed of the *devi* he is asked questions, and the answers that come from his mouth are not his, but are claimed to be the answers of the *devi* herself.

It is not infrequent that the *panda* is also expected to perform certain magical practices, although he is not as expert in these as the Baiga priest is believed to be. These practices are usually in connection with disease, but it may be any form of divination known to Kols. A child is ill, and the priest is asked for his help in healing the disease. The priest will go before the *devi* and vow to take no food for nine days, and after that to make a *jawara* offering. An earthen *ghara*, wheat and milk are given him. These he takes to the child's house and plants the wheat in the *ghara*. Sometimes this is done in his own house. The wheat is sprinkled daily with water and a little milk. It sprouts and grows, and in nine days, after being taken with ceremony to the village tank or a near-by stream, the earth is washed away. The wheat plants and the roots are then brought back to the house where the child is ill. If by this time the spirit causing the illness has not been satisfied, the wheat stalks and roots will surely satisfy her if left on the roof to dry. Like the stalks, the disease will dry up and disappear.

THE VILLAGE SHRINE. It was noted that each village has its central shrine. This, however, is not the only shrine in the village; there may also be other ones, but there is one which is recognized as the chief place of worship, and it is about this central shrine that the chief religious observances centre. The place of worship is a sanctuary of a god or goddess and not the place of public congregational worship. The pictures on plate XXIV show village shrines, and a ground plan in figure 26 is also given to show the disposition and arrangement of the various concomitants. Some shrines have more in them than others, and frequently a red *sendur* mark and cocoanut shells and ashes are the only sign that worship is carried on there. Hindu influences may be presumed.

1 See p. 158.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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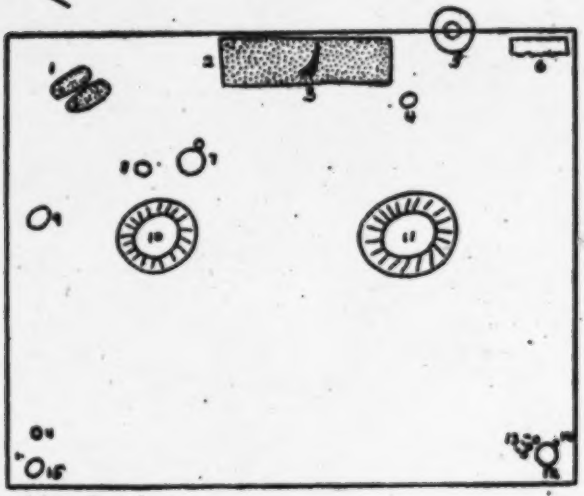


1. Spined Sandals.
2. Bed of Spikes.
3. Ram's Horn.
4. Tulasi Plants.
5. Whitewash for Mounds.
6. Stone from Hindu Temple, coloured red.
7. Small mound with overhanging black bangles - to KHERMAI.
8. Pole with flags
9. Pole about 8 ft long coloured red with bangles attached. Bundle of grass at top; iron lash at base.
10. White washed mound to Khermāi.
11. Do to Markī Devī.
12. Nim tree.
13. Poles with flags as seen on the right
    Black bangles on poles
    Tongs for Sannyāsī Deo
    Bottle of wine
    Three bundles of grass (chhāhur)
14. Iron Trident
16. Pole with bangles and chhāhur

[202]

Fig. 26

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Only once did we find a Kol shrine with a roof. Usually shrines are just raised platforms of earth about the base of a tree, preferably a *nim* tree. The older and larger the tree the better.

Concomitants of Worship. The following items are usually found as component parts of the central village shrines.

1. *Flags* (*Jhanda*). Flags are an essential part of the village shrine. They are usually set up on bamboo poles which are in turn bound to the trunk of the *nim* tree. It is also not infrequent that these are placed high above in the tops of the tree where the flag waves over all. The flag makes it known, they say, that the deity is present, and the colours and colour combinations usually indicate which deities are likely to be found there. The flags also serve as an attraction to the godlings who may come and perch upon them. They also frighten away evil spirits. The bamboo pole is usually about fifteen feet long and may have from one to seven flags attached to it. The village pays for the purchase of these flags unless there is someone who wishes to gain merit by giving them to the shrine. The Kol *panda* who is in charge of the shrine and its properties, puts the flags on the pole and sets it in place. The flags themselves are from 18 to 24 inches in length and about six inches wide at the widest part.

In addition to these larger flags on the bamboo pole, there are always found smaller flags at the base of the tree or at the spot where the blood of the sacrifice is sprinkled. They are quite small and are brought by individuals or families who place them in position when the offering is made. These flags are usually red. When one seeks a boon from the goddess and makes a promise to give a sacrifice if the boon is granted, he should set up a red flag as a witness to his promise. A flag is set up by those going on a journey as a witness to the fact that they will make an offering when they return safely.

In general red is the favourite colour of the *devis*. There are some colours which are characteristic of certain *devis*. Kali likes black; Asmani likes white or red; Khermai is sometimes given green, though red is more common; yellow is for Sannyasi. This set-up lacks consistency, like much among the Kols, for some deny any particular significance and say that the flags are merely decorative. While the smaller flags may be set up at any time, it is usual that the larger flags are set up only once or maybe twice a year, *Chaila* and *Kunwar*, spring and fall, being the accepted times for new flags.

2. *Iron Tridents* (*Trisul*). These are found in varying sizes and numbers. There should be at least one long one with a very sharp point, see figure 25, and there are usually more. Smaller ones

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

PLATE XXIV.

● 778

A shrine in the Kaimer Hills.

Another shrine in a near-by Village. See fig 26 for ground plan.

[FACING p. 152]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

778 411 [785 787] are very common. The trident with the sharp point is used at the time the *panda* or another is possessed of Khermai, and is pierced through the tongue or cheek.

3. *Spiked Sandals* (*Kharau*). Every well-equipped shrine should 778 787 292 have at least one pair of spiked sandals. These are made of pieces of wood in the shape of the sole of a shoe with sharp spikes driven through so that the person walking on them stands on the points. There is a wooden peg toward the front of each which fits between the big toe and the next and holds the sandal on the foot. These are generally used at the time of the trance. When the spirit of Kalimai possesses a man, it will be evidenced by his desire to put on these sandals and jump about in them.

4. *Iron Tongs* (*Chimta*). There is also another kind of iron 778 785 787 [412] instrument found in these shrines: iron tongs used for taking coals out of the fire. When Sannyasi *deo* comes upon a man he will take the tongs and beat himself with them. Hindu ascetics usually carry tongs.

5. *Iron Lash* (*Gurda*). This is a sort of magic chain made of iron links barbed with bits of steel. The handle by which it is grasped is also iron. During the *bawa*, if one is possessed (particularly by Bhuiyan *deo*), he will pick up this chain and lash himself till the blood comes. If some person, possessed of an evil spirit, is brought before the shrine, and the *panda* in his trance recognizes the reality of the spirit possession, he will attempt to cast out the spirit by lashing the unfortunate man.

6. *Iron Nails*. Some bits of iron or iron nails are usually found somewhere about the shrine. These serve a dual purpose: they are tests for Khermai, and one possessed of her can stick them into his flesh without pain or discomfort. They are also used to frighten away evil spirits who may make a disturbance, and are sometimes flung in their direction causing them to fly away.

7. *A Bed of Spikes* (*Palna*). Often a bed of spikes is found in connection with these shrines. This too is to test spirit possession. 778 One possessed of Kali will seek to use the bed of spikes.

8. *A Ram's Horn* is sometimes found. It is lucky to have one [777 237] and it protects the shrine.

9. *Clay Lamps* (*Dip*). Clay dishes into which oil is poured and [354] wicks attached are also found at all shrines. Sweet oil and incense are mixed, and during the time of worship two or three of these are lighted and kept burning. The *panda* lights and cares for them.

10. *Ashes* (*Rakha*). A pile of ashes is always found somewhere [789] about the shrine. This is a good protective device against evil spirits.

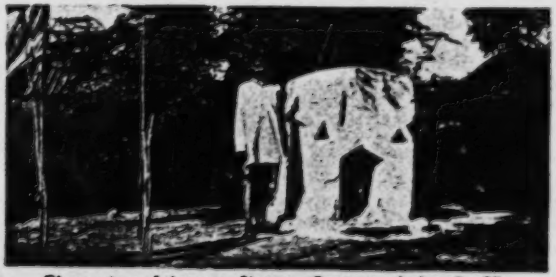
1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

● 778

PLATE XXV.

General view of Village shrines at Barela. Of the eight Kols may resort to only two: Mari Devi (left arrow) and Sitala Devi—Extreme right.

Shrine to Khermai and Asmani Devi at Benda Village.



Closer view of the same Shrine. See ground plan, fig. 27.

[Facing p. 153]

l:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

If, during a worship period, a *bawa* does not come when it should be expected, ashes are sprinkled over the worshipper. Probably some demon is near, and the spirit of the *devi* will not enter as long as a *bhut* is about, and this will frighten him away. A person who is ill, or who is facing some danger, may come, make an offering, and sprinkle ashes over himself, saying the magical words *"ochha, ochha."*

11. *A Grass Bundle* (*Chhahur*). This is the magic grass, and provides shade, shelter, and protection to *devis*. The *chhahur* is composed of stalks of wheat or some other sacred grass like *kans* (*Saccharum spontaneum*), *kusa* (*Poa cynosuroides*) or *urai* (*Vetivera zizanoides*) tied in a bundle to the end of a bamboo stick. These bits of grass are taken from thatch roofs of the houses in the village, usually one stalk from each house. Thus each house honours the deity and will therefore be protected. At times of smallpox or cholera this is a very effective procedure, and one or two stalks are brought from each house and tied together by the *panda* and set up. Each family which gives the grass is thus protected. Strings of red, yellow and black beads are usually hung about the *chhahur*. They give the household added protection as the *devis* are still more pleased.

12. *Flowers*. Marigold (*Tagetes erecta*), and *Tulasi* (*Ocymum sanctum*) plants are nearly always seen in connection with Kol shrines. The marigold is a sacred plant and is usually found in connection with Hindu worship, while *tulasi* plants are often found there too. At Kaimur, Kali lived in a *tulasi* plant and black bangles were hung upon it to indicate that fact.

13. *Bangles* (*Churi*). Bangles, being a feminine adornment, are always found at Kol shrines. These are usually red, yellow or black in colour, and they seem to be used with discrimination. They may be tied on a pole or on a *nim* tree, or fastened to some part of the furnishings of the shrine.

14. *Vermilion* (*Sendur*). Red lead is very necessary in worship. It was seen how it stimulated Mahabir into action. *Devis* like it, and it is also a devil scarer and helps to protect the shrine.

15. *Mounds* (*Pinda*). It is not infreqsently found that there are one or more mounds raised on the mud platform to represent *devis* and to be their dwelling place. These are generally whitewashed once a week. At Kaimur, one was for Khermai and the other for Mari *devi*; at Benda Bhainsokhar was worshipped this way.

16. *Earthenware Vessels* (*Ghara*). These are not always found, but during the hot season are usually hung either in the tree or on a pole over the shrine. Sometimes liquor is kept in them. This is pleasing to the goddesses, especially Kali. Sometimes water is kept

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

778 [271 776] in these vessels, and a tiny hole pierced in the bottom so that the water drops over the shrine. This is popular in warm weather when the *devi* should be cooled and the dripping water is pleasing to her.

17. *Tinsel* (*Tika*): Women often place a small round dot made [302] of lac tinsel on the centre of their foreheads. It is usually of red colour. These bits of tinsel are used in the shrines as well, and are stuck on it here and there. The *devis* like them and they help to attract them to the shrine.

18. *Stone* (*Patthar*). Bits of stone, usually pieces rounded in the bed of streams and longish in shape, are often found somewhere about the shrine. This may be an imitation of the *Salagrama* stones found [831] in connection with the worship of Vishnu. Sometimes they are of *lingam* type such as used in the worship of Siva.

This sums up the items usually found in Kol shrines. Probably no shrine we saw had all these components, though the Kaimur shrine came nearest to it. In addition to the above, there was at Kaimur an unusual feature. This was a flat stone which had apparently come [823] from some ancient Hindu temple and on which two figures were carved. The *panda* of the shrine claimed that it was brought from Rewa and [782 789] that the figures represented Sharda and Kalki. The stone must have weighed about eighty pounds, but, it was claimed, if a *hom* offering were performed when it was moved, it became very light and was [386] easy to transport. It was coloured red with *sendur*. It will have been noticed how imperfectly anthropomorphized the godlings are, and that no special images are required.

The only Kol shrine which had brick walls and a roof was found on the outskirts of Katni. The room measured about five feet square inside, was four feet high, and had a flat roof. This was called the shrine of Khermai, although on the flat top Barmai was said to dwell. [824] Also tongs were there for Sannyasi *deo*. The usual bundle of *kans* grass (*Saccharum spontaneum*) was on top of it.

778 793 The offerings, the lighting of the lights and the placing of the necessary parts, are all in the hands of the *panda*. It is not part of his work, however, to keep the shrine clean and properly plastered. This is the duty of the women of the village, and they take turns in doing it. The shrine is plastered at least once a week and cleaned oftener. The sweepings, including ashes, dust, bits of cocoanut shells and the like, are not swept to the ground beside the shrine, but are carefully put into a basket by the woman who is doing the work. If they should be thrown out upon the earth, evil will result, so they are carried to a stream or a tank and thrown into the water. They are sacred ashes, likened unto the ashes following a cremation and must be respected.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

778 796 755 [534] [202]

Worship at a Shrine. An account may here be given of the worship of the smallpox goddess as witnessed at a village shrine. The first hint of the matter was the beat of drums as a group approached the shrine. The instrument was a kettle-drum, hung about the neck of the drummer. Following the drummer came a young man with a brass tray filled with small *puris* and cocoanuts, carried on his shoulder. Beside him was a younger boy who was carrying two red flags, one of them rather large and on a long pole, and the other proportionately shorter. Both flags tapered to a point. Next came a woman apparently much perturbed, with dishevelled hair. Her head was partially covered by her *sari*. Close behind was her husband who seemed to be a rather elderly man, and with him was a small boy who appeared to be ill. It was not realized at first that this boy was the victim of smallpox. When they reached the shrine the drummer took his stand to one side and continued to beat his drum, while a woman came up and poured water over the shrine and the representations of Khermai and Asmani *devi*. As the drummer played, the woman with the dishevelled hair, who happened to be the mother of the lad, began to stretch herself repeatedly at full length before the shrine, and then, as it were, measured her length around and around the platform on which the shrine was situated. As she did this, she held a cocoanut in her right hand. She was then followed by her husband who rolled in the dust before the shrine until instructed by the *panda* to measure his length around the shrine as his wife was doing. Just before he came to the shrine his body had been anointed with *haldi* and oil, and this gathered much dust and dirt. The larger boy with the tray also went about the shrine as did the boy who had carried the flags. They did not, however, measure their lengths. An uncle from some other village joined them and each went around seven times in a clockwise direction. Except for the drumming, the measuring of their lengths about the shrine was done in silence. Only the adults actually measured their lengths.

When the proper number rounds had been completed, the group stopped at the steps of the platform in front of Kher *devi's* shrine. The tray of cocoanuts and *puris* was placed on the platform and the people ascended the steps and sat on the platform. The drummer seated himself and continued the beating of the drum, and the mother of the sick boy began to perform acts in which she appeared to be imploring the deity. She prostrated her head to the ground, then sat up and wildly swung her body, first from the upright position with a sweeping motion, to a position of prostrate petition. Except for the gentle drumming all this too was done in silence. She then poured water over the shrine and wiped it carefully with a rag. Asmani

l:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

778 was washed as well. The *puris* were then put right beside the shrine
796 in piles and the cocoanuts in front. The two flags carried by the
755 boy were set up along with others which had accumulated at the shrine, the larger by Khermai and the smaller one by Asmanimai. Two or three of the cocoanuts were then broken and laid before the *devis*.

Another procession now started, this time around the shrine of Khermai only. It too went in a clockwise direction, not around the platform as a whole, but on the platform and around the *devi*. This time three rounds were made. The woman with the dishevelled hair and her husband both measured their lengths in this procession, but the others did not do so, they simply walked around. The group then gathered again in front of Khermai and the woman once more prostrated herself, although not as vigorously as before. In the meantime the drummer came down and sat beside a small hedge near the shrine. His wife spread out a piece of cloth in front of him, and the villagers proceeded to pour out their offerings of rice, wheat, *dal* and the like onto the cloth. It was said that this went to the drummer. At the same time individual members of the group on the platform were breaking the remaining cocoanuts into small pieces. These were distributed to everyone within sight. The *puris* were not distributed; that would be done later on.

The accompanying diagram shows the arrangement of this shrine and gives an idea of what was done. See figure 27 and plate XXV.

778 *Offerings at the Shrines.* Considerable mention has been made
782 of the offerings presented at Kol shrines, but more should be added and the matter summarized.

The general tendency is toward offerings of cocoanuts and food rather than animals. This is partly due to economic reasons, but may also be due to the influence of the Vaishnavite sect of Hinduism.

The most common single offering is the *hom*, which is essentially a fire sacrifice. This must have been borrowed from the Hindus. Into the fire burning before the deity is dropped *ghi* and incense. Sometimes pieces of cocoanut, or seeds and drops of lime juice are added.

The cocoanut is universally offered, and it has been suggested
[824] that it is symbolic of human sacrifice and that the shell represents the human skull. As a rule Kols seem to have no knowledge of this point
[773] of view. At the temple of Shardamai and Maihar, the Brahmin priest told us the cocoanuts were symbolical of the head of a certain Alhandal who used to bathe Shardamai daily with water and finally sacrificed his own head to her. She was so pleased at this that she gave him the gift of immortality. According to Crooke, Alha and Udal were

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

two Banaphar Rajput heroes engaged in a war between two Rajput clans. This was dated about 1163-1203 A.D.[1]

Fig. 27

Usually the cocoanut is first laid whole before the deity, and after the ceremonies have been performed and any invocations offered by the *panda*, the cocoanut is broken by hitting it on the ground or on a stone. It is always struck on the stone; not broken by being hit by a stone or other instrument. The shell is thrown aside and the edible portion placed before the deity. Pieces are distributed to each of the worshippers and onlookers, who then eat before her. A priest may break a cocoanut in the absence of the offerer, if the latter is not able to be present.

Lemons or limes are also offered. These please and attract the *devis*. They are also liked by demons and may attract them. Should

1 *Ibid.*, p. 288.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

778 782 [824] such seem to be the case, a piece of lemon may be thrown well away from the shrine. The evil spirit will go after it, forgetting all about what is going on at the shrine. Such spirits are easily outwitted in this manner.

Foods offered include almost all kinds cooked in *ghi*: *puris*, *khichri* and various sweets. *Ghi* itself is frequently put about.

[825] Animals which make acceptable offerings include the chicken, goat, pig and sheep. The latter is very expensive and is not often resorted to. The mature goat or pig is almost never sacrificed—young ones are preferred by the *devis*. Usually a *devi* desires a female of the species offered, and a *deóta* a male. The animal to be sacrificed is brought before the shrine, having been first washed and marked with *sendur*. Its throat is cut with an iron knife and the blood is sprinkled directly before the symbols, or at the foot of the tree where the little flags are located. Sometimes the animal is decapitated with a single blow, and only the head is taken on the platform, and blood from it [262 264] dropped over the symbols. The animal is then cleaned, cooked and eaten beside the shrine, and the people partake of a ceremonial meal together. The bones and bits left over are carefully gathered and taken away, either by some low-caste Hindu who may be around, or by some Kol who takes them outside the village boundary and [435] deposits them in a *nala* or place where water is likely to flow. The kid or suckling pig costs from one to three rupees each depending upon the size. Kols never raise pigs and so have to buy them. Goats, [231] however, are often kept and are generally available. The kind and size of animal offered usually depends on the economic condition of the worshipper. It is also said that when a man desires to make an [787 793] offering, he will pray that in a dream the kind of offering he should make may be revealed to him. A *panda's* advice is also sought.

Some deities are said to have particular preferences regarding [776 822] the colour of the animal sacrificed. The Kols are far from consistent, but generally for Kali or Kalika, the colour should be black. Khermai generally prefers white and Marimai red. Most of the *devis* are not very discriminating.

776 778 782 Kols make these offerings in order to protect themselves from the troubles, diseases and miseries of life. Possibly they will lead the deities to be merciful. They are promised that if all goes well they will receive sacrifices and offerings regularly. If offered properly, these sacrifices are thought to bind the deity and practically force her to do as the worshipper desires. The people are thus psychologically confident of a good outcome. If the deities are kept pleased and happy

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in this way, all is well; but if they get angry, they will trouble the people who have neglected them.

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THE HOME SHRINE. Shrines found at the homes are much simpler than the village shrines and are found either inside or just outside the house, or in both places. Those outside the house are placed in the front wall facing the courtyard, and the wall of the house is a part of the shrine. Sometimes a little hole is made in the wall to shelter the *devi* when it rains. These shrines may be dedicated to any of the *devis* mentioned in the preceding pages—Asmanimai, Kalimai, Khermai, Marimai and Shardamai being the most commonly worshipped outside the house. One finds flags above, and also below; the iron trident; black and other kinds of bangles; a *salagrama* stone; *sendur* marks and the like. Iron lashes and strings of beads are not uncommon.

The place reserved within the dwelling for the household goddess, or god is even simpler. There is a niche in the wall from four to six inches above the floor. Within the niche is found a *salagrama* stone [386] or some iron symbol reddened with *sendur*. Vermilion is also daubed on the wall round the niche. The floor space immediately below the [237] deity is plastered with cowdung. A small trident usually leans against the wall at one side of the shrine; there is a *dip* which is [782] lighted at dusk, when the women of the house prostrate themselves before the shrine. As was noted, both kinds of shrines are usually found. If the house is just a hut of branches, and there is no earthen wall, symbols of the deities will be found on the floor in one of the corners. The house shrine is generally called *dewahar* or *dewala*.

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DEVI POSSESSION. (*Bawa*). The phenomenon of spirit possession is fairly common among certain of the lower classes. The Kols also practise this. The trance occurs before the village shrine and is usually induced only at the time of the *Jawara* festivals, which come at the spring and autumnal equinox. It may be resorted to on other occasions if there seems to be a case of extreme necessity. The actual [533] trance is induced partly by the singing and the beating of drums, at which Kols are so adept. The person seeking the *bawa* takes his place before the *devi* and after a period of concentration and emotion begins to tremble, then shout, beat himself upon the ground, and becomes in appearance a totally different person. During this time he will answer questions put to him by persons seeking guidance, who believe that it is not he that is answering them, but the spirit at that time resident in him. During [151] this period, the one under the possession of the *devi* is practically insen-

1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

825 The *galgal* or *maina* (*Acridotheres tristis*) is believed to be engaged, but not yet married, and is called a *brahmacharia*. He is never injured. Parrots are never molested, for some of them can speak and utter [773] Ram! Ram! One legend, recorded in another place[1] has it that the *Sath Bhais* gave the Kols their gift of music.

824 *Trees.* Among the Kols trees are reverenced largely in connection with worship. The *nim* tree (*Melia azadirachta*) appears to [776] be the favourite tree of the Kol tribe. It is the home of Khermai, the chief deity, and every Kol village or community has a *nim* tree [778] under which the major shrine of the village is found. It has already been noted that this tree has certain magical protective powers and medicinal properties. Demons seldom, if ever, take up their dwelling [513] in a growing *nim* tree, and it is considered healthful and safe to sleep under one.

The *pipal* tree (*Ficus religiosa*) and the banyan tree (*Ficus* [778] *indica*) are also sacred to Kols and it is not infrequent that they put shrines under them. However, these trees are more liable to shelter 824 evil spirits than is the *nim*, and Barandeo is often found in them. We 776 were told about the growth of a certain *pipal* tree in one of the villages which we visited. It appears that Barandeo wanted to live on the veranda of that house so he saw to it that a *pipal* tree began to grow there. The leaves of this tree, however, were repeatedly eaten off by goats but still it grew. The people who lived there then realized that this must be the work of some deity and cared for it. As a result it grew and good luck came into the house. Kols will never destroy a young *pipal* tree even though they know that eventually it will destroy 824 the building. Hutton, in writing about the survival of primitive 171 belief, says the following in connection with the *pipal* tree:

> We may therefore continue to expect to find very ancient and primitive beliefs continuing under the guise of Hinduism. The sanctity of the fig tree, for instance is possibly to be associated with the beliefs of the Negrito inhabitants who appear to have formed the earliest population of India. It is possibly on account of its milk-like sap that the *ficus* is associated with the fertility cults in Africa, Italy and New Guinea as well as in Assam and in South India, and it is generally also connected with the spirits of the dead. This cult appears to be shared by the Andamese who are an approximately pure Negrito race, and perhaps the only race still surviving in the world comparatively unmixed in blood. At any rate they and their beliefs have probably been isolated for some 5000 years at least.[2]

824 As far as Kols are concerned the mango tree (*Mangifera indica*) 776 and the *bel* tree (*Aegle marmelos*) are not commonly inhabited by either

1 See Chapter X.
2 *Census of India*, 1931, 1 : 1, p. 397.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

spirits or goddesses. It has been noted that the mango branch plays an important part in wedding functions. It was also noted that in building the wedding booth Kols ought to use, if possible, wood from the *saleh* tree (*Boswellia serrata*) both for the main supports of the *marhwa* and for the sacred pole, the *magrohan*. The consensus of opinion is that for the latter the *saleh* is absolutely indispensable. 824 [776] [585]

The *tulasi* plant (*Ocymum sanctum*) is found beside Kol shrines and in the courtyards of their houses. It should be watered daily and its leaves are said to have certain medicinal qualities, being especially effective in fevers. Tulasi was once a woman who engaged in religious austerities for a long time and at last dared to ask to become a wife of Vishnu. For this presumption Tulasi was cursed by Lakshmi the wife of Vishnu, and was turned into this plant. Vishnu comforted her by promising to be near her in the form of a *salagrama* stone. So they are often associated in worship and even in Kol shrines a *salagrama* stone is usually found close to the *tulasi* plant. The leaf is highly scented and a bit is often broken off by Kols and eaten with their food. During the evening hours it is worshipped by having a small *dip* lighted before it. [757] [773] [778] [263] [782]

Dead trees are generally feared as the death of a tree is most certainly due to an evil spirit's influence and a *churel* often kills a tree to make a residence for herself. [775]

MARRIAGE OF TREES. The Kols have a ceremony for the marriage of trees. The mango tree is the one usually married and this should be done at the time it first begins to bear fruit. Unless such a tree has been married no adult should eat of the fruit, although a child may do so. There are at least two methods of marrying trees, both of which require the Brahmin priest. In the first instance a mango tree should be married to a tamarind tree (*Tamarindus indicus*). This tree may be near at hand, or even some distance from the mango tree. The ceremony appears to consist in having a married couple wind a cotton thread coloured with *haldi* seven times around the tree. They should move about the tree in a clockwise direction and as they do this the Brahmin recites sacred texts. First the mango tree is wound then the tamarind; if they are close enough together the thread may be stretched from one to the other. It is not unusual to find a mango and a tamarind tree planted close by. Many of the features of the regular wedding are incorporated, and following the function there is a feast. 824 796 [574]

In the second instance a small wooden peg, variously coloured, takes the place of the tamarind tree. This may be made out of tama-

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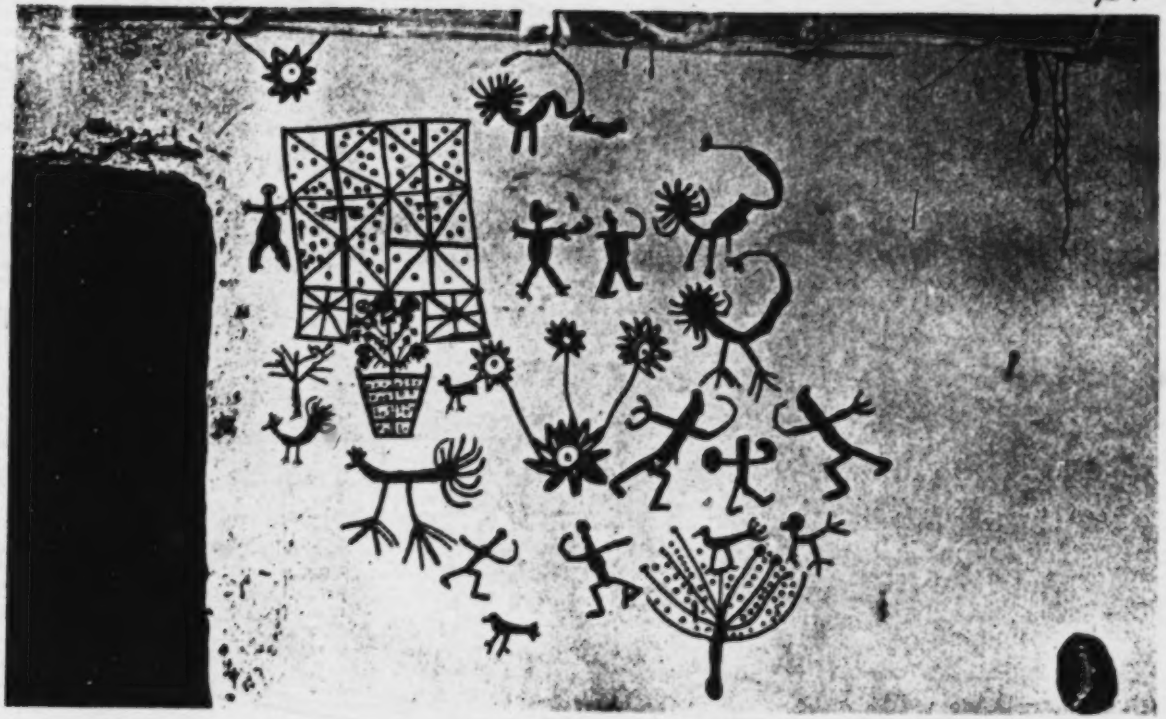
PLATE XXI.



Designs on the wall of a Kol House in Garha. The Figures represent a House, Sunflowers, Men, Tigers, Peacocks, Birds, Flowers and Trees. Dwelling Place of a Devi is at the lower right hand corner.

[Facing p. 346]

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1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

231 422 families in Kharara Ghat owned neither goats nor cattle. If cattle are allowed to graze in the reserve forests the yearly payment is twelve annas for a bullock or a cow and six to eight annas for a goat. Young animals may graze without payment.

In Panagar and Deori chickens are the common possession and there are but a few who have goats and cattle. At Benda, with 15 houses of Kols, there are six head of cattle and five goats. They cannot raise chickens there as they are plagued with cats, both domestic and [778] from the jungle, which makes this impossible. Cats are regarded as sacred animals and are called "mothers" and may not be killed[1]. The villages which are largely made up of people employed in industrial enterprises are found to have few animals. The more agricultural type of village has more cattle; but those who consider that they are here today and gone tomorrow do not have many animals. In the Kol *mahallas* about Jubbulpore the number of cattle is not large. Nowhere did we find a Kol who owned a horse. As was seen[2] they have a [784] tradition that causes them to consider a horse something that should not be touched.

427 651 *Taxes.* Direct taxes are paid by very few Kols, for unless he actually owns his land the taxes are not paid directly. Those who take land on shares from the *malguzar* pay him one-third of the crop as his rent; in other cases a certain sum per *khandi* of seed sown is agreed upon. Some Kols about Barela told us they paid seven rupees for 1¼ acres of *malguzari* land and another of the same place fourteen rupees for three acres of the same. The houses in which the Kols of Barela live are built on *malguzari* land. When a new house is put up they pay the *malguzar* two to three rupees depending on the size of the house and report that subsequently no further land rent is asked for. As long as the buildings are occupied by that man, and kept in good repair the land on which it stands can be controlled by the builder. 651 In other places there seems to be a yearly tax for houses; on the municipal land in Jubbulpore it was two rupees per house per year; at Garha, near the edge of Jubbulpore town limits the landowner asked one rupee per house per year. This amount seems to be the general rate or tax to *malguzars* for the houses or huts in which they live. In [466] the industrial settlements they are given rent-free land on which they may erect their huts when they live on the property of the company employing them.

1 See page 198.
2 See pages 34-35; 210, 211.

l;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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[192]

Khambā : the sacred post.
Kalas : The water pot.
Chauhā : The small raised platform under the booth.
Haldī : Turmeric (*Circuma longa*).

7. This is a wedding song from Barela. The headings indicate the time the song is sung.

8. The important guests are teased by being told that they are being fed with food fit only for animals.

9. Another song with a sting. Sung in connection with the arrival of the bridegroom's party. From Salavara.

10, 11. From Barela.

12. A marriage *dādrā* from Barela. The whole is a coarse series of jesting absurdities : the unmarried woman can hardly have a daughter-in-law, and yet the latter is pregnant. It is, however, her sister who is fed the food given to women in confinement, and a woman who is a mere spectator to all this suddenly gives birth to the child which a barren woman takes and suckles. [522]

13. A wedding *dādrā* from Katni. The *kadam* tree is the *Nauclea orientalis*. In wedding imagery the bridegroom is frequently likened to a parrot.

14. A *rāī* from Katni. The spot of vermillion denotes a living husband. [302 554]

15. A wedding song from Barela in which the bride is teased and warned to be careful. A lakh is 100,000. [80]

16. From Barela. The *bardī* is being teased. Kajli forest is a forest frequented by elephants. A *gutkā* is a magic ball prepared by devotees which, when eaten, is supposed to make one invisible. Here it makes others disappear [789]

V. Songs of Religion.

1. *Dādrās* from the vicinity of Katni. These are examples of numerous songs of this nature which were collected and translated but are not reproduced here. It is likely that most of the songs centering about Rām and his experiences in search of Sītā are borrowed as in their actual worship Rām is seldom taken into account by Kols. Dasarath was the father of Rām. 539 577 869 [177]

3. From Sihora : a *rāī*.

4. A *dohdrī* from Imalhapur. The *ghumachī* is said to be a fruit of reddish colour with black spots upon it. It is probably the *ghunghachī* (*Abrus Precatorius*.) For *chakhī-chakvā* birds see notes on 1 : 2. [137]

5. This has references to the Rāmāyana story. A *dohdrī* from Imalhapur.

6. A song for the *phāg* season, composed in Garha. *Phāg* and *holī* refer to the same season. A *bunda* is a dot or decoration on the forehead to enhance a woman's beauty. Kashi is the holy city of Benares. 539 [302]

7. A *bhajan* called *sumaran*—'song of remembrance'. Hinglās : or Kailās, the holy mount of Siva in the Himalayas. Maihar : a town and state about 100 miles north of Jubbulpore. It is the seat of the main temple dedicated to Shārdā *devī*. [778]

8. A *bhagat* from Jubbulpore. *Lagan* : the wedding horoscope. *Bardī* : the party which comes to the girl's house bringing the groom with [585]